

Defend the Five Campaign

Defend Branch Rights

This campaign has been launched because of the attack by Unison's leadership on four London branches and five officers of these branches. The attack began at the June Local Government and National Delegate Conference in Brighton when these branches sought to challenge why **our** conferences are constantly denied the right to debate issues by the standing orders committee just because some see them as too controversial.

This year we couldn't even debate the pension's dispute at our local government conference!! The five officers, under investigation are Glenn Kelly NEC member and Bromley branch secretary, Onay Kasab, Greenwich Branch secretary, Brian Debus and Matthew Waterfall, Hackney branch chair and secretary respectively and Suzanne Muna, housing corporation branch secretary.

Despite the fact that the rules of the union protect the democratic right of members to campaign they are being investigated for producing and handing out a leaflet (over page) that complained

about the manipulation of the conference agendas by the standing orders committees. Despite the leaflet making no derogatory remarks about any individual member of the standing orders committee, the former president announced an investigation and then allowed and supported an unsubstantiated and unjustified attack of alleged racism without giving the branches the right to respond.

The leaflet used the well known Buddhist proverb and cartoon of 'see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil'. This is a widely used piece of established political satire to express a view of not being heard or listened to; it has no racist connotations.

The fact that black delegates were involved in authorising and agreeing the leaflet as well as handing it out demonstrates that they had no concerns. As one black delegate said, "They will not be allowed to use the colour of my skin to hide behind their undemocratic attempts to control the conference or the delegates."

The leadership's attack has nothing to do with taking the issue of racism seriously, but everything to do with attacking branch officers who all have a track record of challenging the leadership and of fighting racism. These attacks will be vigorously fought, including if necessary appealing to the courts for justice, which the leadership seem intent on denying.

The reality of this attack is that it is part of a wider attempt by the union leadership to clamp down the democratic rights of members and branches.

So fearful are they of the growing opposition to their misrule that they are now seeking to shut down all voices of opposition in the union.

They know that increasingly members are questioning why our leaders fail to give a lead in the fight against low pay, privatisation and the attacks coming from the likes of single status. In what is supposed to be a union led by the members, in the last couple of months alone they have banned branches from campaigning for a no vote in the pension ballot and distributing NEC member Glenn Kelly's vote No report.

They threatened Onay Kasab the Greenwich branch secretary because he wrote an article on single status saying that his branch had voted to **"reject any proposals that lead to a loss of a single penny from a single unison member"**, telling him this was against union policy because **"it may be**



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necessary for some members to take a drop in pay to achieve equal pay”!!

They have **now** told the health branches that they **cannot** call for their members to reject the pitiful pay offer in their current pay consultation ballot.

The leadership of the union has the temerity to attack UNISON members' rights in what is supposed to be a member-led union, and they do it in the

name of the “democracy in UNISON guidelines”. They are increasingly distorting the union rules and guidelines on democratic rights to say no branch or individual can campaign on anything that is in opposition to the leadership.

These attacks on democratic rights are part of a general offensive by the leadership to hang onto power no matter what. They took fright at the recent NEC election results where several prominent

right-wingers lost their seats to those who want to see a fighting union. For some in the leadership even this small gain was too much; they are now prepared to attack the rights of members to stay in power.

We call on all branches and members to oppose the undemocratic witch-hunt on these five union activists and begin the fight to win real democratic control over our union.

We are asking all unison members to oppose this witch-hunt and pass the following motion in your branch:

This branch, having seen the “Let Branches Decide” leaflet is shocked that the National Union is wasting time, money and resources on an investigation and possible disciplinary action against 5 branch officials.

We believe it was perfectly legitimate for those branches to have campaigned against the ruling out of 1/3 of conference motions submitted to this year's conference.

We believe that it was wrong that that the sovereign body of the union was denied the right to debate issues such as pensions, the election of union officials and the control of industrial action being given back to branches.

We believe that these branches should not face attacks for having the temerity to raise complaint when these debates are banned.

The union is misusing the fact that the leaflet used a cartoon, which is in everyday use and is a genuine well-established piece of political satire.

We believe this attack to be nothing more than a politically motivated attack on 4 branches and its lead officers.

- 1 An end to this investigation.
- 2 This motion to be sent to the NEC and next Regional Council/Committee.
- 3 Circulate and encourage members to sign the “Defend the Five Petition.”
- 4 Circulate material from the campaign to members and other branches seeking their support.

The leaflet - judge for yourself



UNISON

5/2 06/07

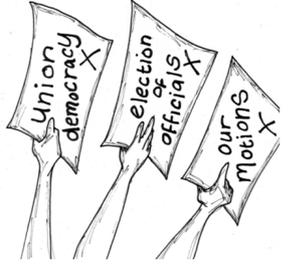
Standing Orders Committee

WHOSE CONFERENCE?

- This year, the Standing Orders Committee (SoC) rejected an unprecedented **50+** motions submitted by branches representing nearly one 1/3rd of all motions submitted.
- The motions covered important and controversial issues such as **organising industrial action, the election of union officials and New Labour's attacks on public services.**
- At appeal against rejections, as soon as one SoC objection was effectively rebutted, another was immediately introduced.
- Were these motions rejected because they were controversial?

Our conference has a right to discuss union democracy and member control over funds, disputes and branch support structures!

LET BRANCHES DECIDE



VOTE TO RETURN THESE MOTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Supported by Housing Corporations Branch; Hackney LG; Greenwich LG; Bromley LG

Contact us for more information/Send individual donations to:

“Defend the Five Campaign” at:
PO Box 858 London E11 1YG or email to:
info@stopthewitchhunt.org.uk

Send protests to: The General Secretary, UNISON,
1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ